

# Ways of Mercy

The poetry of Allison Grayhurst



Allison Grayhurst

# *Ways of Mercy*

*Allison Grayhurst*

*Edge Unlimited Publishing*

**Ways of Mercy**  
**The poetry of Allison Grayhurst**  
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*Tadpoles Find  
the Sun*

**No Gods, no Heroes,  
only women and Hector**

**The misdirected vengeance of Hera.  
Grey-eyed Athena's wrath and jealousy,  
and Dionysus, bringer of merciless punishment –  
(feral mother ripping the limbs from her son, unknowingly,  
but when awakened, an internal bonfire grief  
beyond extinguishing.)**

**Hector was the only noble hero –  
shouldering his course and obeying his love.**

**Crafty Odysseus tossed baby-Astyanax  
from the towers of Troy.  
Crazed Achilles knew only the fury of his passion as he  
flooded Scamander with the cut-up corpses of his mad rage.  
Ajax the Great impaled himself in service to his affronted ego,  
and Ajax the Lesser – a coward rapist  
of the prophet pure Cassandra.**

**Give me one-eyed blindness, stay on the path, past  
Hecuba and her wild rivers of unfathomable suffering –  
childless when once a mother of many,  
Queen of an honoured realm.**

**Give me Electra over Hera with her young-woman's devotion  
and subterranean heart, tied to a father that would have killed  
her as he did sister-Iphigenia  
on the pyre-offering of war, victory and fame.**

**Give me a settled glory – my God of Mercy  
instead of candles, Jesus  
instead of Apollo's thick sensuous thighs or golden curls,  
demanding matricide of Orestes.**

**Give me Helen in her betrayal of red-haired Menelaus, Helen,  
daughter of the Swan, lover of pretty-boy Paris, Helen,  
mascot and scapegoat of war, but never the cause.**

**Give me Clytemnestra over Agamemnon, daughter  
too of the Swan, bearer of a mother's authentic wound -  
Iphigenia lost on the bloody rock  
by obeyer-of-Zeus, mighty-father  
Agamemnon's royal hand.**

**Zeus, kind only to sycophants,  
Zeus, serial adulterer, user of woman,  
sire of many children, lusting as the sunlight lusts  
for Earth, to seep warmth into her crust  
and heat up the whole of her surface,  
demanding offspring life.**

**Give me Penelope over  
teller-of-tall-tales, Cyclops-outwitter,  
slaughter-of-suitors Odysseus.  
Penelope, with her patient intelligence weaving,  
unweaving, keeper of fidelity  
for twenty years, holding her own  
up against the plight of a woman's, even a Queen's,  
accepted inequality.**

**Give me steadfast Antigone,  
crowned by an ancestral curse,  
champion of funeral rites,  
brother's defender, daughter-guide,  
caregiver of a doomed once-king,  
embracing her savage fate with magnificence.**

**Give me poor Io, chased in her heifer-frame  
from flat plains to cliff ridges  
to Prometheus's cursed crucifixion to  
finally a resting point in Egypt –  
Poor Io, ancestor of the brute-blooded Hercules,  
who claimed madness-by-Hera turned him  
into a murderer of his wife and sons,  
who was no Hector, only  
undefeated.**

**Give me Andromache's zodiac-fingerprint,  
for she held Hector inside the cavity of her loins,  
and he loved her, and for a time, they both knew  
happiness.**

**Because,**

**Because there is a child,  
there is infinity and grace  
like a grape, crushed, filling the  
senses – exotic abundance.**

**Because there is love between lovers  
the broken shelf doesn't need replacing,  
the pond can dry up and no one will lack fresh water.**

**Because a mother's love has no limits,  
it stretches past darkness, obstacles,  
remains fierce and tender at once.  
She knows herself less important than that love and  
all else perishes beside its glowing depths, worthless.**

**Because when others fail in love, God does not,  
picks up the slack – gives promise like a shield or like  
a bucket full of rainwater.**

**Out of chaos the primitive gods were born -  
divinity separated to be comprehended, grasped loosely.**

**Because there is one God,  
because there is Jesus – hands, feet –  
the threshold of freedom in eternity.**

**Root yourself here. Tie the ribbon.  
The ditch is now a road.**

**Because of mercy and forgiveness,  
mercy as forgiveness,  
we all have won.**

## **Sand**

**Kick the tree.  
The tree is a bone  
cut out from the Earth.  
Jump on the pavement and crack  
it with the force of your rage.**

**Withering is not an option,  
white-knuckling it  
at the hidden horizon is keeping  
you alive.  
But it is futile, an out-of-tune song  
wrestling for a harmony it will never find.**

**Praise the shellfish, the moles underground.  
A world of faith is forming on your tongue –  
you can taste it, but it is not enough  
to satiate.**

**Release desperation and the anger that follows.  
Feeling imprisoned was your default position  
when being shepherded into reality.  
Now you are new like Adam and like Eve  
you died in brutal increments  
and in brutal increments  
you are being reborn from time,  
unlike Adam, unlike Eve.**

**The stream you see is a blessing. The wind  
is all around, and sometimes when listening,  
it is faraway instruction. Other times,  
it topples you over from its reeling power and at that time  
you know for certain God is God  
and there are no substitutes or shortcuts  
or sure-fire prophecies  
that will ease the fear of unknowing.**

**There is just that wind that says  
'Go here' 'Go there' and when there,  
maps out  
an unexpected direction.**

**Centre-Faith  
(while dreams swirl all-around)**

**Soothsayers and seers and shamans  
have children, have the same  
rising and falling stars,  
cannot say “This is truth”  
“This will happen”  
There is only God’s voice in the now,  
leading to the next step and only  
that step until the voice comes again.**

**Even in times of constant accepted prophecies,  
the intelligent threw their crystals,  
took notes of the pattern  
but balked at the interpreters.  
Journeys to the Navel-stone were daily –  
whore-kings and crushed-citizens  
sacrificed animals and even slaughtered  
their own offspring  
on the advice they were told.**

**But God is one  
and God is permanent  
and us,  
being tied to time,  
are not privy to visions into the future, no vision exact –  
we are all equally blind, and that blindness  
is a gift that opens the door to faith,**

**free-falling in our days,  
fortunes and misfortunes,  
arms open to God’s ways and grace,  
open like a painter choosing his colours  
like a poet, her words.**

**Open  
ecstasy in the listening,  
surrender in the execution,  
gleaming, gloriously summoned  
into immediacy, into an all-demanding  
autonomy.**

## **A Dream Suspended**

**Sinking in the void, held by  
nylon line and my eye sees nothing  
but that void, cannot turn to the  
sunny above or straight ahead to  
the insect landscape and daffodils.**

**So the void spreads and sprawls, and then  
starts to whisper – touching the shadow  
to my skin, making promises  
that haven't even begun their manifestation.**

**Visceral futility stronger than fear  
as I dangle over that blank-space reality,  
and there is pressure like living gravity pulling me,  
tensing the hold, wanting me to snap  
and plunge into pure nothingness,  
become the state of vacancy, have no frame,  
no barrier or beating pulse.**

**It is winning, I hear  
the creaking  
with even further taut suspension and  
my weight grows, nearing that midnight twist.**

**A dream suspended that has my whole future in its hold.  
So I call out for help like I have many times before.**

**Do I strike a match, pretending it is a star?  
Hang like the tarot hangman over that dull and ruthless ache,  
swing a little and I might feel the possibility of a breeze?**

**I dreamed myself untied and running, sometimes  
skipping, brimming with a joyous equilibrium.**

**I dreamed there was no void, only a place  
of still-time, a purgatorial interlude as I shift  
from this flow into another.**

**Light that came**

**Light that came  
from the unending grief -  
black-hole of pity sphere,  
riding, sucking in, swirling  
doomed to perpetual collapse.**

**Light that came  
from hours caught in madness,  
thrashing in the ribbon-tied, lock-chain  
shadow centre - vacuum plague, persistent  
as a wild current and just as impersonal.**

**Light that came  
and broke the shell,  
reached in and lifted, lifted me out of  
the drowning water. That light is  
a cold mercy, a sharp sword as my only defence -  
detach - slice the limb that offends and watch it  
bleed with indifference.**

**Light that came  
to a changeless darkness changed  
everything once maimed  
so it could walk again.**

**Light as a miracle, whispered -  
don't give hell power,  
separate yourself, cage it,  
and when you feel ready,  
kiss its forehead, sing it a song  
- lullaby, lullaby.**

**Glory, believe**

**Glory, believe  
the evidence is clear,  
brought to a boil and  
now boiling over.**

**World molested by greed,  
indifference and distraction.  
The pitch has elevated to burst  
the eardrums. Scavengers are  
scavenging and nothing is left.  
Old ranks topple, protection is  
a thin veil, fear overcomes prayers,  
prayers that kept us sane.**

**Children and animals are the new Earth's aristocracy,  
Bless this time of turmoil - setting  
everything upside down, right side up.**

**Jesus still walks the barren roads,  
sandals in one hand,  
at ease with whatever is to come.**

**Let me walk - a servant  
yet absolutely free to not serve.  
Let me make an oath to the celestial night,  
an oath to replace panic with faith and  
uncertainty with light everlasting.**

**I see the light everlasting,  
the wheel that is not a wheel  
but a sphere.**

## **Exit Door Closed**

**Down**

**because the flame is still holy  
but the moon's cold cloak  
has won.**

**Leaning into the crossing over,  
sweet exhaustion, the love of  
absolute rest.**

**Is this what the fish feels  
after minutes on the hook, on the dock,  
or the rat gasping in the trap,  
lunging, flailing before finding  
the peace of death?**

**Fear is not a name, keeps no company with surrender.  
Holding the reset rose in my hand. I see colours  
that please me, the brush stroke of renewal  
and a house true to its inheritance.**

**Every hero eventually dies,  
and their mourning is made  
into a ritual.  
Light of God, kinder than a mother's wing,  
richer than the formation of a new constellation.**

**My arms are enough,  
even my meagre successes seem sufficient,  
infused with Your light,  
taking away the pressure of existence,  
keeping pace with duties  
and the honouring of dreams.**

## **Stark Relief**

**Blundering, in disguise -  
a gift masked in disease,  
tongues imploring forgiveness,  
love tested at its roots, glorious  
as mountains.**

**Boredom and fear meeting in unison,  
finding a strange fulfilment behind locked doors,  
venturing to walk in the open air, take hikes,  
sit by the lake-waters and dream, alone.**

**A gift that doesn't carry a typical joy,  
but breaks down the superficial slaughter  
of what is truly meaningful, simplifies the one thing,  
the all thing, that connects and is worthy of attention.**

**Love in illness, love at death, love in gratitude  
for the lifeforce we have been given - its sacred mission,  
not meant to be plundered on distraction and greed.**

**God is the only safe ship left to climb aboard on,  
the only ship afloat on this burning sea.**

**The gift has come, and yes like everyone,  
I am afraid. In my mind,  
I join the people singing,  
raw in mutual fear and faith,  
a collective voice, harmonized, joined  
from balcony windows.**

**The light has gone out.**

**Nothing is plenty or even sufficient.  
The door opens, but there is no escape  
just the long wait under an isolated sun,  
walled up in fear and deficiency.**

**It could have been completed, sealed  
into the account but darkness hammered  
the blush from blooming, and yes, the lesson  
to see was written on the Stonehenge, in  
the past lives in an ancient Athenian tribe or  
when setting five-alarm fires on the moon  
when you were a golden muscle, ripe  
and violently ending anything soft.**

**Greed gave you all the cards, opinions that  
lacked a spiritual dimension. It will not come  
until this ecstasy is laid flat.**

**You see – O Tantalus!  
You see the stain that created your torment, unearthed.  
Walk on it, shed its blood and let it bleed out  
its deeply embedded drive and expectation.**

**Hell is individually formed,  
a private backyard betrayal.**

**Walk into the shower,  
let it cascade down and dissolve this last  
unseen-before glitch – see it, wide-eyed  
and say ‘forgive me’ say it and  
be free.**

## **Rationed**

**Ration out the unified soul,  
make it many instead of one.**

**See the breakdown of what is holy,  
split into particles  
uncomplimentary, wasted.**

**Trust in the brute because he has  
no self-doubt, no self-examination,  
Because it is easy to sacrifice  
autonomy for certainty  
and slice the swan's wing  
for monetary gain.**

**Before the circle became a line, some  
nutshells still held their core - arguments were  
for the sake of reflection and deeper knowledge.  
When the circle became a line, tyrants were given  
free-reign - the mutual exchange  
between fear-and-getting replaced morality.  
The ones of lights passed away  
passed over their passion, replacing  
faith with conspiracy theories.**

**Describe this gift of life.  
What does it mean to you?  
There are many waves,  
one water  
equality within the hierarchy  
value in no-control.**

**Death is automatic  
but choice  
    no God  
    yes God  
is always  
  
    an open door.**

## Open Wide

**On the table, the whole of humanity  
burning with fear, this onslaught  
of harm, but love is not the victim.  
All who have a soul within them, end up  
rising up to meet the challenge of justice  
and compassion.**

**The few who died long before their death  
are now indisputably barren  
and frighteningly corrupt.**

**Acts of mercy, acts of grace –  
all of us deciding  
which side we believe in.  
All of us are now citizens, heroes of our charge,  
children of the divine, effective, more  
than helpless, feeding off God's mercy, day to day  
hour upon hour - held hostage to our inner world,  
stripped of superficiality and distraction,  
called to claim the slaughter we are accomplices to -  
to choose the resting-nest of gratitude.**

**We are all asked to perform doubtless music,  
formulate our morals and digest them  
like a cure we have no choice but  
to adhere to**

**for the horseman is at our tails and his shadow  
is hard upon our shoulders.**

## Deathbed

Strength has changed  
appearance, ends with a mask,  
begins with food of only a humane source.

In the late winter I built my nest,  
made a cradle from branches and waited.  
Now that spring is over and no offspring came,  
I consider this cozy island a curse,  
feel the heat approaching and have no joy to give.

Upstream, blood soaked in debt and weapons  
I cannot wield, weapons  
on the floor, by my feet, too heavy to lift.  
I embrace the dread like I once did grief – inhabiting  
my days with failed effort, trying to dull transgressions,  
manage my Sisyphus rock  
– push for the prize that never comes – push,  
believing it will, knowing it won't.

My barren longing, unremarkable, repetitive.  
I would change my name, my shape, if it would help,  
grow plumage where there is none, but my energy is crushed  
with clinging, and the freedom that lords before me  
like an oasis is only finished fiction,  
a book of great magnitude, but  
foiled of substance and lasting nourishment.

## **Build**

**By the whirling heap of fate  
a new being is born – one that  
watches, moves and holds.**

**One that stands without future plans  
or regrets but takes two days to make  
a decision and then sticks with it, in spite of  
contrary opinion.**

**Blood on the knees, covering the unborn joy  
that does not know if it can withstand the first breath,  
but still kicks its way out of the womb.**

**There is nothing easy here on this planet,  
its sharp beauty cuts and bends everything living  
to the cruel unpredictable violence of survival.  
Collapse, famine, or warm nest out of the rain –  
the same parallel process of dying and becoming.**

**Standing noble when in weakness,  
or succumbing to slavery  
is the only vantage point choice.**

**Touch your eyes,  
touch an outburst of sorrow,  
touch beautiful geography underfoot.**

**Faith is a house, takes you in  
to live sometimes as part of the furniture,  
sometimes as a carpenter,  
making furniture, sweeping,  
making more furniture.**

## **Mercy without Miracles and Miracles without Mercy**

**A day 2,500 years ago  
and life was the same, struggling  
to understand God and fate  
and how the stars may hold  
prediction but lack all means  
of mercy. For mercy  
was an evening without power, was weak  
as was seen  
the majesty of forgiveness.**

**It was before Jesus came as sibling, as friend,  
revealing the depths of God's grace, the redemption  
in surrender and late evening devotion, breathing  
with the direction of the wind, open to hardships  
as to miracles, orchestrated by a loving hand.**

**First God was many in our minds,  
segregated, dissected, tangled with human  
hypocrisies, pride and jealousies.  
Then God was one in our minds,  
higher, mightier than death, closer still,**

**until**

**Jesus**

**let us hold God in our arms, be held like  
a tiny flower head is held by a child's hand,  
cupped, yellow buttercup, glowing,  
treasured by God, each of us,  
a necessary and loved creation.**

**Back then, even great minds glimpsed  
such profound greenery,  
but could not complete the joy.**

**Jesus is  
humanity's completion with God,  
connection, void of complications,  
like an infant's first smile or that infant,  
growing, learning,  
holding out her arms,  
saying your name.**

## Water Wings

**Taking off my water wings  
soon**

**maybe in a year or two,  
maybe in ten**

**I will front crawl**

**fast to the edge, go under, somersault,  
push off and speed,**

**or climb the high diving board,**

**up the steep metal steps, gripping**

**tightly, half-way there to the edge, three quarters then**

**race and leap, arms outstretched, thumbs locked and**

**going down, hitting the water fast, gliding across**

**the whole of the deep end.**

**Letting go of spiritual infancy, primitive**

**magic-tricks that sometimes worked,**

**most of the time, didn't,**

**to soothe my anxiety, needing**

**the evidence of God, instead**

**of trusting faithfully, fully**

**- water wings off, front-crawl free.**

## Wind – Marrow – Bone

Death comes softly  
like a small wave or  
a blanket, lessening  
the stroke. Slowly  
the energy leaves and also  
the will power to not let it go.

Death is gentle as a spider's steps  
or like the innate laws of decency  
methodically, incrementally, ignored.

Death, I rejoice in you, as I didn't know  
how easy your touch was or how  
pain and weakness arrive like your welcome mat.

Unless you arrive violent, but then, that too,  
because it is quick, is merciful.

Bravery on the altar where you are worshipped  
where you demand every part of a soul unseen to be seen,  
equal parts of cowardice and courage, the darkening whine  
and the warrior who makes it up the stairs  
when the body's strength is but a secret, barely  
audible, straining to be heard.

Death you are tender,  
you ready us for the quiet nod - yes  
or the scream that ripples across the ocean - yes!

You make sure to narrow us completely  
so you are the only way out, and we want out,  
we want you – like a lover - Death,  
lover of the drowned, the burned,  
the cancer ward occupants, the accident fallen  
and illness that compresses the lungs,  
topples over the perching bird.

**In the end, we all want you,  
jealous lover of the living,  
you take us all  
either with a breaking virility or  
smother us in a maternal fold.**

**Beautiful Death,  
I have come close to you  
and I learned  
you are made of love,  
embracing completely,  
sensuously,  
in the final surrender.**

## **Prometheus Speaks**

**Prometheus speaks  
from my bathroom tiles, wailing  
his defiance and fiery nightingale burning  
with his tongue still unrooted  
and his limbs bound to the rock, spread  
like wings – Titan of the windfall, humanity's  
hope and champion, more brilliant than  
his dumb and primitive siblings, more committed  
than their arrogant and willful offspring.**

**Prometheus in the shower curtain, dripping  
liquid fire down the drain, plunging  
into the underworld depths  
then up for a greater torment to meet the predator bird,  
dispelling all screams and ghosts and holding tight  
to his suffering-throne and his compassion  
for such a flawed creation.**

**Prometheus finally rescued  
as the warm water exerts itself from on high,  
- strong Herculean flow -  
the wounded centaur accepting his fate.  
Flow Prometheus,  
trustworthy, burning, speaking  
your conquering gospel,  
the first crucifixion  
the first flame ignited  
before love's great inception.**

## **Dying, an echo**

**Hardship harder than  
the unprotected inferno I fell into  
that has sealed above.  
No courage will raise me out  
of its burning cavity,  
its lava-ruin grief pressing down  
like a great wave of heavy water.  
All that's mortal in me is sick, subjected  
to this bright and furious master.  
All that is immortal in me has gone silent,  
its sails clipped, its joy orphaned and emptied.**

**What happened?  
How did this take me, pull me  
into its unbearable heat so fast, so frozen,  
draining my life-force with its hot poison,  
leaving me no option of flight?  
How did I become an exile of all I held sacred,  
hardly walking up the stairs,  
every breath a banishment from life,  
every resting position, a pressure on my chest  
like an anvil coming down, down  
and staying its weight, concave?**

**What do I see? Nothing. Value  
has turned to ash.  
Love holds my hand but cannot release me  
from this hell.  
I wake up and prayers have failed me,  
all my understanding has crumbled  
like wafer chips of dried-out clay -  
eagle broken, sliced up on a sharp rock.**

## **Bird**

**Up into  
a wet pillow cloud sky  
bird of flame  
like a yellow rose  
touching the toes of gods,  
past treelines and skyscrapers,  
daughter of the wing,  
receiver of the mating dance.  
Bird beyond laws and names,  
the visionary's touchstone,  
keep your flame and rise  
like love rises and engulfs  
the blooming darkness or like water rises  
devouring the whale-hunter's boat.  
Up into the firmament,  
higher than the experienced stars,  
your craft is art, your light uproots time.  
Do not land, but keep rising, a gold dome  
over the blue, answer every dream  
with a glowing !yes!  
be our temple and our immortal hope.  
Bird  
absent of grief or longing, bird of flame,  
you are smooth, loose and pliable as  
the flesh of deep eternity.**

## **Hell Seen**

**Unseen, the darkness is a tsunami gateway,  
engulfing every fragment of will,  
builds unexpected, a shock of water filling  
the lungs, chaos infesting every corner of the mind,  
rational thought on fire, cindering, seared by  
loveless insanity.**

**This is the inheritance that must be thrown overboard,  
tossed like a corpse that is plagued with a contagion.  
No room for sentimental mercy which is not mercy,  
only a longing for comfort that in the end  
compromises protective barriers that must be upheld.  
All ties must be cut and loyalty to God,  
the only link left.**

**I visited hell, shadows grabbing my every corner of flesh,  
loneliness like an amputated limb,  
released and thrashing, abandoned  
from its fertile blood source.  
I was afraid, every cell drenched in horror.  
I had no voice, no substance.  
I was shown hell, experienced hell  
a flood, a plummeting down down**

**Even in that evil landscape,  
my loved ones saved me,  
prayers said outloud saved me,  
and the haunting loosened its hold.**

**Now seen, I see  
there is only God or hell -  
God or  
anguish, anxiety, blunt force destruction,  
pounding torment, a rotting waste.  
God and  
life embraced,  
a rapturous and difficult glory.**

## **You Open Your Mouth**

**You open your mouth and  
I am gone again like  
before I could walk, like  
before I had anything but you  
and this connection, gripped  
in a violent spin, intimacy purging gravity  
by free will alone, blood for food and food  
tossed on a gravestone, seeding a graveyard,  
lording triumphant over reality, more potent than  
waiting for the streetcar in a cold sub-zero winter,  
waiting with wet boots and uncombed-through hair,  
like fruit that never spoils  
or gets polluted with scented-hand touch.**

**You say destruction  
and I am beating the light,  
slashing the torpedo into  
smaller precise devises of doom.  
You say reconciliation  
and I am beside you, planting  
my vengeance like dead peeled skin,  
like waking and walking  
to the bathroom, leaving the dream behind.**

**You open your mouth and  
you open a door to a feast  
outstripped of butchery and good cheer,  
outshining all but the lover's volatile love pitching,  
emerging, continuing, clear,**

## **Breastplate**

**With this breastplate  
forged in the fires of tangible Hell,  
I will go forward, doling out  
gifts that God entrusted me with,  
feeding sparrows, starlings and squirrels.**

**I will command my days with a mature discipline,  
more so tied to the wind in a place of freedom,  
boundaries set by my soul.**

**Everyday I will eat and be grateful.  
I will leave my licence plate in the gutter,  
travel light like I did when I was younger,  
one knapsack for years – live in this home  
but claim no possessions. I will listen,**

**pitch my tent in any wood  
as long as the birds guide me there,  
and I will keep myself breathing,  
full of breath –  
active, on watch.**

**I will love, love like I do  
with a personal intensity  
the ones that feed me with their love,  
keep me in grace and breakdown the shadows.**

**With this breastplate I will go,  
for I know how evil consumes  
in small amounts with small yeses,  
small indulgences that grow into  
a vast hole.**

**I will wear sandals in the summer,  
a jacket in the winter and this breastplate,  
now grafted to my skin,  
willfully dreaming this journey forward,  
surfacing uninhabited shores.**

## **Hector**

### **Shining Hector**

#### **Man-killer Hector**

**Hector, prince of the walled city,  
lover of loyalty, prized invincible,  
devoted, never set adrift by lust or changing distractions.**

### **Hater of war Hector**

#### **Warrior Hector, protector**

**of a worthy ideal, a harvest of fulfilment,  
wealth for all, raining down from your native desert sky.  
Husband on a private balcony, holding time still  
for declarations of love as the flooding enemy-army neared,  
gathering its hero-giants and enraged half-gods,  
sealed in indestructible armour.**

**Hector, son of Queen Hecuba and King Priam, brother  
to reckless sweat-hearted Paris.**

**Father of an infant babe, Hector,**

**who feared death like every other, ran and was chased,  
then finally stood alone, willingly, facing his murderer,  
knowing the result like knowing the lunatic gods, how  
they etch out each mortal's destiny  
on the inkpad of their erratic whims.**

**Never marked or bruised, your corpse above ground  
for eleven days, still fresh as when your soul first departed.  
Your father begged to bury you, winning this small mercy,  
you were buried, sacred rites restored.**

**You were mourned for your perfect beauty,  
(their defender lost, their defeat inevitable).  
You were loved for your strength,  
the kind derived from clear-cut purity,  
a rare internal moral code.**

**Glorified, the tale of Hector,  
outliving millenniums,  
outlasting countless other heroes.**

**Hector of the soft dark hair, golden helmet, shining.**

## Wings

**Continue dreamer, down the halls,  
through the citadel,  
gather wings in your arms – small ones,  
medium ones, feathered and translucent.**

**Follow the mini-current across the line,  
then rush through forbidden lands,  
drop those wings and wave your arms,  
sing loud, sing ugly – nothing is a branch  
that can't be broken, nothing is a swing  
that can't be stilled.**

**Far away, in the ocean's depths  
there is no visible sun,  
no use for warmth or a changing horizon.  
The bird is condemned  
in those depths and your voice  
is just a bubble.**

**Rush to the edge of the shore  
and decide your fate, glittering surface all aglow,  
confined on land or in the water?  
Take a step forward or  
turn around, commit absolutely  
and move.**

**Continue dreamer, down the halls,  
listen to the warnings,  
swallow them into your gut and  
test your courage,  
gather those wings and rush.**

## Cliffs

I died every day  
on the sorrowing cliffs,  
a wolf pack closing in,  
things I knew and believed in,  
ordained, then tossed over the edge.

Prophecy was nothing, and shelter and bread  
connected to this tortuous trope,  
turned comfort upside down and spat  
upon my flush face with all the vigor  
of a personal enemy.

I fell asleep near the cliffs, woke up and wondered  
why I was left here - still alive, no rescue in sight -  
thinking of a helicopter, an angel, an army of  
hunters or even a large helium balloon  
to grab onto and ease my descent.  
But I stayed near the cliffs, hearing the pack,  
seeing their eyes through the undergrowth  
but never feeling their jaws at my flesh  
and never crossing the barrier into the abyss.

I stayed on the edge and waited as though I was  
already in my grave, and I thought - is this  
a purgatory punishment? A loop etched in linear  
time, a fire on my back that burns and burns  
but never consumes?

**I am not sure if I am sleeping.  
I am not sure if I am truly alive or a ghost  
destined to repeat an unending horror,  
wandering through the same torment.**

**I am ready to see, close my eyes, nearer, nearer, and leap,  
be dashed into fragments or be vindicated, either way,  
relieved.**

## Onslaught Cloud

When courage is smoke,  
and it takes far too much effort  
to build a mound to stop the flood,  
when fears and the bleeding winds of reality  
destroy the indestructible diamond, turn it  
into dust particles, lapped up  
by the tongue of unsuspecting animals,  
and the storm, it digs a wound like a valley,  
red and brutal,  
when that happens, it is time to sleep, dream  
of better days, watch TV, read  
and listen to other people's stories,  
bury your battle-slain heart under the covers and wait  
for meaning.

Meaning when found will restore courage,  
soothe the raw chasm, give faith in the setting sun  
and maybe even  
press up against you, thundering,  
a glorious beauty.

## **Pretzel**

**This prayer was the last prayer  
devoured and regurgitated into a lie.  
Hearts I voted on  
desired safety above courage, avoidance  
above truth and speculation above action.**

**Two-fold was this falsehood, this  
pollination of pitiful love.  
Drug-induced, polluted with vagueness  
and amoral substitutes for honour.**

**I believed in you, comforted you  
in your wanderings and in your torture.  
But this river has gone undernourished,  
dried into a barely moving stream.  
What was grand and glorious,  
a life source for a whole ecosystem,  
now strides without gusto or usefulness.**

**Liar at the full moon.  
Liar when you hide in your fantasy,  
and then you lie again and hiding it,  
say it does not count but it counts,  
each lie builds a bed, littered with compost,  
bars that block the view from the sky.**

**Everything I thought was strong,  
unbreakable, deathless,  
has ended in this infestation,  
as you play-act queen light warrior,  
indulging in ego-feeding conspiracy theories,  
harming truth, defiling acts of other people's courage.**

**So much suffering, whitewashed,  
arrogantly dismissed, by you,  
doubtless in your cult-convictions,  
saying ‘awakening!’”, building platforms  
on top of platforms –  
a grotesque paradigm of crazy,**

**where you have all the answers  
and I have nothing left  
to hope for or to say.**

## **Dissolved**

**A weighted shadow was on my back,  
triumphant, feeding off of me  
in day-to-day thoughts,  
dealings at the grocery store,  
getting dressed  
and walking.**

**It flourished its victory everywhere I went,  
in the judgement of strangers and the shame I bore,  
wearied by reality.  
It was thirsty, thirsty for the substance of my faith,  
feasting on the debauchery of my despair and in that feast,  
it grew four times its original size,  
cementing my wings in permanent collapse.**

**Now this weighted shadow is dissolving, swiftly  
in glorious movements of clear! clear! clear!  
It has not gone completely yet, but I am stretching,  
able to raise my neck and strengthen my shoulders.**

**My fears are painless, grace has entered  
and brought the promise forward.  
Under my eyelids shapes are forming,  
ones I have never known –  
tribes of mighty animals and  
communities of celestials.**

**We say hello.  
We walk on the fresh born grass,  
and the grass morphs into a mountain,  
with a valley,  
with a river.**

## **So Far**

**So far the winter came  
for 22 years, steps taken  
to burn the past failed  
like speaking, washed up on silent shores.**

**So far I lived with eye drops  
from the river of honey  
stolen and then savoured.  
The Earth's cord was tied to a heritage  
of fear and inevitability – children  
with beaten upon organs, panic, grovelling  
at the feet of survival, so far.**

**So far, the miracles came  
and covered my breasts with oil,  
softening my hair with almond milk,  
saying – this is enough – so far.**

**Half of the day I was tormented,  
half of the day I was in bliss,  
in a private heaven full of secret doors  
and perfect-shaped rolling hills,  
watching my children grow, loving  
and learning from my Apollo-love husband  
of the lyre and bow and arrows, riveting,  
slicing the dead wood, bringing both burn and joy.**

**So far I have not been on many airplanes,  
have stayed most days indoors,  
feeding those children and animals  
of rich personality and anomalies,  
enduring some, mostly,  
nourishing, being nourished.**

**Now I am drinking solely from the sky,  
releasing the tether of gloom  
and penetrating the center  
without the leftover madness  
of senseless suffering.  
Cracking the shades of oblivion, released  
by a gift that was always coming  
and by the grace that has carried me  
so far.**

## Simple

The darkness crashed  
on a sapling morality,  
cracked pretensions and then hope.  
It was two-fold, folding the  
young visionary and the tired warrior –  
into one power, depleted, elapsed.

It weakened a once flourishing joy, skillful  
in its demise, necessary for what was  
born after – compassion in harvest,  
a home well built  
on any hard or soft shore.

Raise the clock, break its hands,  
snatch immortality from the arms  
of culture.  
Tiny dreams are gold. Trust in those dream,  
even more golden.

Fast, faster in the circle –  
run of linear time, gleam fastest  
at the summit  
at the nadir,  
and commit to only love.

## **Take a Tree**

**Take a tree  
and its bond to the Earth,  
its spell upon the sky  
its stretch and swing among the squirrels.**

**That tree is all trees,  
powerful without a pulse,  
slow to hunger and slow to react.  
It sleeps when it wakes,  
receiving its action even when in full bloom.**

**Somebody climbed that tree,  
wanted to build a fort but didn't,  
just sat between a strong forked branch  
and looked across and down.**

**Another touched that tree, its crust trunk,  
the folds and curves of its sensual permanence.  
In that touch was found a different measure of time,  
a way to stand back and wait for growth.  
In that touch was a shifting,  
deeper than meditation,  
connecting below and above rooftops.**

**Take a tree, in any season, at any time of the day,  
the alien dimensions it moves between,  
its response to the moon.**

**Knock on that tree softly and it will open.  
It will greet you,  
invite you in and show you a place  
without dance, without disorder –  
primordial creation, a wellspring-confidence,  
a dream that has no dreamer.**

## **Times**

### **Sometimes**

**I am dropped into evening's glory  
beside you, relieved of cunning, anxiety,  
at peace with the dried nest cupping a crushed egg.**

### **Sometimes**

**it is forward  
and the wind that is wild is on my side  
gathering forces to aid in my direction.**

### **Sometimes**

**I am single, cloaked in  
a dazzling and lush solitude, plump  
at the core.  
Roots are wings and those wings  
never suffer fractures or deformities  
but are final in their perfection.**

### **Sometimes**

**I ask for just enough  
to be guided from my prison cell  
to build a lasting fire and have food  
for my children.**

### **Sometimes**

**I know I am loved  
and those times are the best times –  
infinite voices to chose from, colours  
everywhere and heaven tangible,  
inside my sheltering home.**

## Temple

Expanding, raw and pulsing  
like newborns that grow into  
individuals of their own  
from one source  
of everlasting literature.

From a cave of damp demise or  
from violent fires, stoning heroes, forging heroes,  
never quite sure who the enemy is.

From a journey of fantastical obstacles,  
no mistakes made to stop and graze  
and settle for anything but home.

Others have felt this eternal wealth of inspiration,  
drank at its well and spoke –  
making more riches, forests where feet  
can travel and be in awe.  
And from those others, still more have come –  
one line flowing from the beginning.

O Ilium and Ithaca!  
The same stars spinning.  
Our beautiful Earth rest in you -  
devotion, cunning and courage.  
Love matters, but these things  
which are the actions born from love  
matter more.

Your fire is bright, brighter than  
your ancient sun, has rhythm, repetition,  
has harvested a hymn, etched permanently  
in the foliage of our collective souls –  
strong shoulders, driftwood, the first breath-cry  
poet-bard.

## **Cost**

**When you bleed  
do you bleed in the summer,  
early morning, on wet grass?  
Or just because the door is open,  
do you close it and walk up a steep hill?**

**When you are walled in, is it prejudice  
or wisdom, packing you tight, with no  
left-over spaces to stretch?**

**Each day comes like a sword, living is charged  
with complexities that must be cut through -  
amputated calcifications to reach the fleshy core.**

**I thought we could sail straight through the waters  
but you, lover of chaos, called in the mad waves  
and rode them gleefully to any shore.  
I can only catch up,  
follow and accept your choices.  
I can only ask myself –  
what fresh boundary must I break through?  
What deep-set morality must I re-think?**

**For love, for you,  
to keep us true, connected.**

## Which Way?

Blue I wondered  
blue in summer in  
the mornings, caught in  
the snail-size tales of  
futility and inevitable floods.

Crooked boundaries, solid as  
vapour, stung, trapped my fears  
far from knowing the mercy of self-forgiveness.

I carried my purse like a stone, collected  
empty wrappers, useless pens  
and expired medicine,  
burning always from head to foot,  
impatient for change,  
running into the concrete walls  
of my collected fate.

Today, I look at the bloom of yellow flowers,  
full in their last burst of joy before the frost,  
and I am learning to drop that stone,  
accept what lives and what cannot.

My bitterness has lost its vein to travel through,  
forms and then corrodes.  
Let others count their dollars  
and covet extravagant houses.  
I love my home like a trusted friend  
and my garden is a portal into heaven  
where the robin drinks and the mange-bitten squirrel  
has made her home, digging, storing nuts.

**Throats are cleared.  
God's giant voice has won  
my full attention.  
Switch me off. I am ready  
to swim far into the ocean, fast  
until my lungs burn, desperate for air.  
There I will stop (the shoreline visible, but barely).  
There I will wait for an answer, recover my breath and  
decide - further out or back home.**

## **Hand**

**I bore the yoke,  
surging against the assault,  
counted the thin space that buffered me  
from disaster.**

**At the beginning there was obedience  
but also the certainty of great heights.  
After years of being unable to stretch,  
there are no more prophecies or ranks to aim for  
or glory for a future horizon.**

**The unknown is dense and impassable  
as a steel sealed curtain.**

**Maybe here I can learn what Jesus always knew –  
that prayers are speeches of the greatest importance  
but listening holds more sway,  
that obedience to God  
is the only currency-exchange, must be  
the authority of each steps taken,  
is the root determination of peace  
or anguish.**

**The first time I held out my hand,  
I expected tangible abundance,  
fruit, seeds, candy.  
Now I hold out my hand  
and hope only  
to keep it open.**

**The air is light, causing no pressure, no trembling.  
It is easy in its emptiness,  
lacking anticipation, lacking  
a future, past comparison.**

## **Sister Lost**

**A sister lost  
to a mad-weave calamity,  
hanging off the platform,  
an ego-dream of dumb self-importance  
- the war on truth that  
masks its face as though it were truth,  
but is only a gate to an easy explanation,  
a system of hellish accusations and propped  
up pillars of false justice, combating fake forms  
urging anger forefront, poisoning  
by such a sure promise of victory.**

**I send you sleeping sister. You say  
I am sleeping and you twist your conspiracy theories  
into a cloak of great magnitude, condescend,  
so confident of your place of holy honour.  
You jumped over the mark, missed it  
and plunged into an upside-down dream of reality.**

**Once, a sister, a comrade, an unbreakable bond, broken.  
I cannot see you. You cannot see the evil  
you have wrapped in fool's gold,  
claiming righteousness  
as you measure your worth  
by this aggressive attack on truth, denying  
the wind, a child's cry, a mother's redemption.**

**Sister, I loved you, I still do,  
but you have crossed the line.  
It is terrifying to watch.  
It is a shock to finally see  
who you have become.  
You took the plunge  
long before I accepted your choice.**

**By your choice, your inner conflict  
became an accelerant bile-fire,  
you became a plurality, parts, parts  
condemned to feed off  
intellectual Jell-O,  
find entertainment, immaculate purpose  
in unbalanced passions and impulses,  
claiming a cure by creating a disease.**

## **Pythagoras-Ovid Royalty**

**Unwed from heritage,  
for the tie of tradition is darkness,  
and the price in the folly of lineage,  
is a line to cross, to be born into  
but never earned.**

**Sink or swim in your history,  
families are special  
like all families are special, like  
all cultures are beauty mingled with cruelty -  
things that hardened into meaningless rock  
and things that are allowed to move  
and keep their lifeforce.**

**Be born like a new babe,  
eyes set on only mother-father God,  
don't carry the price and the agony of your blood  
that is only blood, not spiritual, and only mighty in illusion  
by you ordaining it so.  
Belong nowhere and hold that freedom  
that is hard to own and is immediate  
as a mountain is  
or a rainstorm.**

**Race with the wind, lighten the burden,  
bathe in a burst of ever-fresh glory,  
toeing the line for no one – release  
all wounds and accolades  
of what you claim as your own  
but where and who you've never been –**

**If past lives are real, then belong to every  
race, every culture, every species.**

**Once we were all fish, so  
stop fishing.**

## **Doorway**

**Feet are flesh  
and have been flesh  
for thousands of years.**

**Saying wisdom is fresh  
is the vanity of a present-age.  
Better minds have spoken before,  
challenged their own authority and  
didn't take death as seriously as  
we do.**

**Keeping honour was the only  
crucial wealth, reciprocity and  
the graciousness from host to guest.**

**Mothers loved and mothers grieved  
with same weight of worry of motherhood,  
and lovers held hands, wishing for great blessings  
to match their great love.**

**Music was poetry and poetry was  
the greatest gift of all bestowed, poetry  
to keep humanity sane, stretching  
further into the heights of immortality.**

**Feet wore sandals, raced across  
Mediterranean shores. Hands  
were always hands too,  
beautiful, complex, useful.**

**Healers were rock-like with equal  
shadows and solidity, attached to the earth,  
rituals woven from the lion's breath.**

**Warriors too, took their virtue from  
the mountains, climbed and often leaped –  
breaking bones, arresting their pulses, lusting for fame  
and a good afterlife.**

**My feet are soft like many who have feet I know.  
Compassion still counts as the highest offering  
offered from one to another.  
The suffering of one resonates,  
relatable across centuries –  
a doorway-understanding  
to the suffering of all.**

## **World Away**

**World away of hollows  
where light escapes, gets  
through, flourishes in the  
sluggish dream of humans.**

**World of many layers – up  
to pure communion and down  
with the languishing un-animal beasts.**

**Rivers that flow and merge, travel down.  
Oceans rise up, their surfaces new,  
surfaces discovered – air, sometimes just  
air, other times, divine space where eyes  
can come close in, examine the stars.**

**World away of purple and gold,  
merging lava with its harmony above.  
Thorns that wake the many sleepers,  
places where forgiveness is the only escape.**

**Stones are mirrors, their surfaces blurred,  
their boundaries unmasked and glorious flowers are  
eternal.**

**World away where the faith in money  
is a mouse-trap, catching souls, keeping them there,  
broken and anguishing.**

**World above of pure worship  
and simple communion - smells move like lust,  
desires amplified, approved,  
like electric current-catalysts  
for standard-accepted-forms of fulfilment.**

**Colours of elms and of eagles, everything  
less thick and less challenging.  
Heads up, love  
the obvious go-to solution.**

**World away of patchwork tunnels,  
going down, going up, a journey  
matched in the imagination –  
many dimensions, many limitations  
added or lifted.**

**Moon half. Moon whole.**

**World away where  
walking forward with truth at the helm  
is the maker of glory,  
a living lucky charm.**

## White Butterflies and a Red Squirrel

Influences deserved  
never arrive, and  
the gift remains in the pocket  
like chapstick on a cold day,  
or as bits of sharpness to remind you  
not to get too comfortable, complacent  
or convinced of your rigorous calculations  
when you calculate the sides of a square,  
a triangle, an oracle reading.

People you thought would never go,  
have gone, walked away  
from sanity's reach, most likely never to return.  
Things you wish would have left years go, remain,  
your days outstanding, tied to the  
root-whip survival, lashing.

And there is more never expected -  
a banquet of nourishing literature,  
a husband still coalescing with brilliant light,  
two children grown, kind and weaving,  
and the animals, older, happy  
watching the birdbath in the flush garden,  
in a backyard that in the early morning  
as you scan the interior and the perimeter,  
you are sure that nothing could be more glorious,  
pleasing, leaves you praising  
for being allowed to witness such royalty.

**God's love heats up your pores,  
fills your nostrils with green scents,  
fills your ears with the chatter of communities –  
sparrows, starlings, bumblebees, white butterflies  
and the red squirrel. You are sure  
such kneading, thinning-thickening harmony  
is the natural state of being,  
propelled to experience this nirvana, (spinning, spherical)  
knowing tomorrow it won't last, but also knowing  
it will always last, existing, uncorrupted,  
sealed, continuing in this moment, this morning,  
this day, in this exact summer.**

## Communion

A snail is a slug with a shell,  
is like a hand with only one thing to claim,  
was like my thoughts that leapt out of a stream,  
fell on land and could not get back.

Old life

like a spider caught in quicksand,  
gone into the murky underground.

Worry was a cavity,  
a reservoir endlessly re-filled,  
scooping up a cup, resolving a problem,  
as old problems grew larger to fill the space  
or infant ones formed.

Leaving the dramatic spinning wheel,  
mending the wounds of sacrifice.

How long before the thirst to satiate  
is satiated, then becomes thirst again,  
greater than the first longing?  
Why is there heat everyday and never rain?  
Is time just the planets rotating  
like spherical untouchable gods, or  
is it nonsense, divisions made  
for small minds to draw imaginary  
pathways through stark oblivion?

When I learned

Jesus walked with his arms open,  
his hands empty, feeding, being fed,  
then I arrived in God's grace  
as though I had always been there.  
My past was relinquished,  
incorporated like a candle flame  
into a larger fire,  
into the greatest summit.

## Ambrosia

Light feet  
feathered longing  
between a grazing herd  
and the grand appearance of peace.  
Dreams arrive, slide in like a knife  
to reshape reality, denying  
blood spray, the ripped winter coat,  
stories that die untold.  
Add the nectar, symbolisms of jumbled-up  
joy – a dog's smile, a run through the forest,  
tie it together like a housecoat or an idea that has  
lingered without reward. And there,

fate is waived  
for a stronger endearment, choices  
are made that shock the natural order.  
Love is understood as an act of the greatest courage  
and bodies change, transform their elemental structure -  
wind becomes sea, stone turns to air.

All guests are rested and fed through this metamorphosis,  
things that disfigured and imprisoned are blessed  
for the strength and moral clarity that they gave, then  
like dreams, they are kissed gently,  
remembered when first waking, then  
while brushing teeth, they are  
gone.

## The Night Before

I praised and held the wind in a jar.  
All the while, the stars melted, old gods  
were replaced by new ones, and the once invincible  
were fated to run lunatic through communities, terrorizing  
and leaving pathways of blood with their strong arms  
and war-loving minds.

Dancers curled up like centipedes,  
poets lost their poetry to analysis and clichés,  
and worst of all –  
no one was able to tell the difference between  
what was gold and what was a trinket.

My hair was long, back then, I remember,  
my beaten-up hands were supplicating,  
but every blessing was denied me, from weariness,  
from loss and from my own hard-hearted pride.  
I was ready to be fatally wounded, as such an ache  
would be an adventure.  
I was ready to run across a river  
and test the currents' force against my own resolve.

So I went north, away  
from the wicked heat Mediterranean sun.  
I praised, and in that praise, was half-way perfect.  
A mouse could not know my skilled imagination  
and an eagle was too high to tap deep into my shadows.

I went up a mountain, but first over  
that river. I sang a new language when  
I touched the snow, sang,  
making an Eden in that virgin toil.

## Mid-air

I reached across the riddle-barrier,  
shaved my head and walked through the door.  
I took my clothes out of the closet  
and burned them,  
I watched the light dim all around  
and walked over a cliff.

I did this without a choice, only a decision  
to embrace a movement forward.  
I was commanded to do this, and I consented,  
not without struggle and self-loathing,  
not without fear and a sense of deep failure.

Now I am falling, I am in the air, eagle-spread,  
a sharp pain in my side and the wind whistling  
its rapture.  
Everything people do  
is bound to kill them eventually.  
Take dancing or bricklaying or being a mother.

I am still falling, I have not landed  
in someone's arms nor on the sharp rocky bottom.  
The pain remains, so does the wonder,  
as I fall, falling,

## Advance

Leave this place,  
it is for beginners  
and the ground is an overgrown  
outside used-to-be sanctuary, trapping  
you in its weeds.

Be steadfast as a revelation  
years after being revealed, infused  
to your intelligence, supplying water  
and detachment when necessary.

Walk through the ruins then jump the fence  
and do not relapse into nostalgia or a thousand  
what-ifs that have no viable conclusion.  
Pull the plug, cast away what was once  
a masterpiece but has since degraded,  
orbiting a dead star.

It is easy as taking off a coat on a warm day.  
It is dialectics and you are at the nadir,  
traveling the circle around, soon to rise.

Leave what you cannot afford to keep  
as it is too invasive a burden  
and you are ready to expand, stretch out,  
canopy a richer domain, permitted  
to be fully nourished and explore.

## Crossing Over

Crossing over into  
a porous aftermath,  
a root-return basket  
of exposed veins and ligaments.

It is sad to be like a lung  
that cannot fully expand, but good  
to open a window and appreciate a breeze.

When I quit feeling responsible  
for what I am not responsible for  
I will be free to sort out my assets  
and impressions, structure them into  
a viable source of fodder and food for  
all who I love.

When I wore a uniform,  
I thought myself the whole army.

When I wore the monastic robe,  
I placed myself at the mouth of the void  
and whispered to myself achieve! achieve!

When I walked with no arms,  
only legs, no language, I thought boldly in block colors,  
in over-exposed senses, smelling indisputable exactitudes  
like insects mating in tall grass, and fish  
rotting on the river banks, and even the sun  
had a smell, its fragrance dependant  
on the season and its placement in the sky.

**When I lived without a body,  
lived as part of the swing-loop-spin cosmos,  
formless and yet whole,  
*thick and thin,*  
*curved and straight, sensitive*  
*without the possibility of being wounded,*  
I knew crossing over  
was treacherous.  
I chose to cultivate the separation principle  
and see if I could return to unity.**

**The body is a tale, the rest  
has no account to record.  
I filled my flask. I died fighting  
and also when surrendering.**

**The law will never be known,  
only fragments of the law, a maturing of,  
and maybe even inclusions, after a long  
century time.**

**Jesus is water flowing, limitless like heaven is  
in vitality and truth.  
All I must ever do is guard that connection  
as the only thing sacred – everything else  
that is irrational, rational  
or cohesive or unleavened or supplied  
will make contact but be redundant,  
be imperfect, and leave  
a longing, insatiable.**

# *Lantern*

**What were you as a man Aristotle?**

**Bend the mind in fifteen different places  
to pull out a particular, that  
at the moment of capture,  
shifts form and demands further  
adaptation.**

**Summersault  
through definitions, substances,  
entities - modeling God  
on unity, and evil on chaos.**

**What genius generates such a mind,  
dilemmas purely in abstraction -  
a voice swimming in a multi-layered  
vortex of ideas and sophisticated vocabulary,  
adept at defining, circulating, making movement,  
unparalleled density in each paragraph,  
in each line of unmatched cerebral dexterity?**

**So I found you and I don't know how  
to take you in, if I can, but your observations  
of elemental spirituality are exciting, and each read  
is a like long dive into a living coral reef-barrier -  
colours alien, animals sublime - both prey and predators,  
proficient in the art of survival, and the energy!  
Take me in -**

**if what I thought would take a week,  
takes months, and I sift through  
your summits and grooves slowly, tasting  
sugar, sour wine, touching  
the tips of wings from the flight of many birds zipping  
around my atmosphere at capacity - sometimes  
as shadows, sometimes showing their bright plumage,  
and those times I can glimpse, participate**

**in your singular reasoning, hear a man's voice  
labouring under metaphysical complexities  
and bend my mind to the cyclone of your gospel,  
spinning, upside down but in perfect order -  
    maker of an intellectual sermon,  
thinker uncorrupted, unlike your mentor Plato was  
with his didactic prejudices, with his what-fors  
his where-fors - but you!  
    piecing out the divine,  
making meals, ideals without rigidity,  
chaptering out the primitive and the holy combined  
with your plying, delving, ricocheting symphony  
investigation.**

## **The Peace of Angels**

**I will release to receive  
the peace of angels.**

**I will count the changes  
as realizations, tip over  
the radicalized, and be singular  
in my transcendence.**

**Purpose is a translation. Within  
are experiences discarded  
or validated by memories.**

**Floating or being summoned  
are counterweights, dangerous to stand  
anywhere  
but in the middle.**

**Loss is a hot vapour - burns as it first rises  
and then, no more.  
Love is everything - fills a moment  
with the breath of eternity.**

**I will find the colour that draws me  
the closest and I will choose it.  
I will release the rest, know this surrender  
as an exhale, a baptism to witness  
that splits the sky.**

## Consecrated

**In a murky limpid place  
you speak to me, vanquish my  
anxieties with your radiant flame,  
speak and say  
the circumference is the sphere, is the line  
and the space beyond  
the sphere.**

**Cruelty is natural, mercy takes effort,  
choice, consciousness.  
Accepting mercy takes even more, a leap  
out of the perpetual karma-shadows, a daring  
to be without a past or a people or pebble stones  
in your shoes.**

**You speak and say  
succumb, and I will take your greed of self-knowledge,  
all of your knowing, intelligence, reduce it to vapour,  
collapse your preconceptions with the tranquility of  
the first morning, and you will praise me with the wonder  
of all who are newborn, without guise or storages.**

**Fall down, you say, to your hands and knees.  
Look up, you say, to the charity of the sky.  
Your being that was before is burned.**

**You say, love,  
and I will be your restitution,  
your water, your vortex, your art.**

## High Alert

I see a fruit fly  
on the mirror –  
summer is a shallow blanket  
lifting into autumn.  
The moon has lips  
like a shimmering worm,  
wet from the rain.

The accelerant-fire came from a lightning blast,  
after death, in-between  
catching a breath.  
The waters rose like a mountain  
from a calming surface and engulfed my home whole,  
sinking it into the lightless pressure below -  
heavy, unbearable, rippling through each cell, each  
cell exploding, axed of oxygen,  
gasping for mercy in a merciless day.

I climb the stairs - the ghosts of that day  
embedded everywhere, in the nails of the old wood floor,  
in the claw foot bathtub, and in the dust on the shelves.  
My mind rewinds, relives every fragment of horror,  
saturating my pores, bloating my heart  
with unimaginable panic, again.

But this morning there is peace in the hallway.  
There is a sleeping, happy child who has grown  
into a loving, dynamic man.  
The rug was pulled,  
but the furniture is now set right.

**Breathe because breath  
is all I have,  
and this day without the quicksand-seizure,  
this day to appreciate a peaceful morning,**

**to honour my son's astounding life-force, and his smile  
embracing the road ahead, his fighter's dance,  
quick-footed, energetic - a sturdy happiness,  
perpetual, more permanent and potent  
than the earthquake-eruption destruction  
rolling (still visible)  
in the wake behind.**

## **Episodes, cascading**

**Phoebus Apollo, cascade your light  
around the dreary onlookers singing,  
singing for the smooth edges of their many cracked bones,  
for their children moving off the jagged rocks,  
for the perishing of wasps in autumn,  
and for the loss of those who pretended their hearts were pure.**

**Twice I fell away from all I knew.  
Twice in one year the earthquake-volcano-tsunami  
erupted, sickening my house, my loved ones  
and all my belongings.**

**There I bent like a moist twig,  
rose out of the waters, slug-like, cold like  
the first touch of hot hot fire.**

**Once more God's name is intricate, exact,  
washing me aimless in my once  
spiritual certainties.**

**Once more, every bridge is broken, the waters  
swell, jut onto, swallowing, the shore.**

**My fear is a razor frantically cutting.  
My panic is plural, multiplying,  
tightening its barb-wire around my chest, throat,  
and my eyes are hurting, pinprick pain when they open,  
my eyes when they open  
have gone silent, silent, blank.**

## **Down Stream**

**Savage poison  
eclipsing the Wolf moon.  
Time is putrid, embracing me  
like an impending slaughter.**

**Can't stop the attack no matter  
how hard I strain, or promise  
to defend the purity of my thoughts.  
It will come to no good end, going on  
to this end, head in a block wrench,  
dreams staggering crippled  
out of sight.**

**Come back before  
I smash my back  
on a long fall down the stairs,  
into the darkness, past purgatory,  
past the tragically resigned.  
Come on, enough of this fated disaster.  
For months now I've held my own,  
held my head high, praised  
every morning with directed action.  
I can't go back, picking through the rotting carnage,  
pretending, giving energy to the pretense,  
when my energy is sacred, belongs  
to you O God and nothing else.**

**Please save me from this hissing atrocity,  
this lethal succubus and the flashing behind  
my eyes - the gigantic war inside,  
knife wielding, piercing, rein-less  
and the dark blood pain.**

**Please O God and Jesus, breathe your light  
into me, fully. Let me love you the best I can.  
Is there anything I can do? Is there any chance  
for a miracle?**

**The shades are being pulled. The dungeon steps  
are steep and I am heading down,  
into that familiar filthy chamber.  
Please take my hand, O God, lead me  
into the open air and say "Go on your way -  
you are mine, no longer a stranger."**

**No grief, No madness**

**See yourself with real eyes,  
there is no need for useless mythology.  
The winter has come, the plants have died.  
In spring they will take root and begin  
to show promise. Just like you,  
nothing magical –**

**You swell in times of joy  
and deflate in times of sorrow,  
stitching the inflatable boat.**

**This is your seat, accept it.  
The struggle is the dream,  
a hot order of suffering, unnecessary.**

**Stand up, kiss the Buddha and sit down.**

## **The Letting Go**

### **I**

#### **Blast**

**Blast your devil's heart,  
make it into paper confetti,  
take it into outer space  
and leave it there.**

**You stood on my shoes as I was  
wearing them, dug your heels in  
and spat in my eyes.**

**Cruel corpse rising from a muddy grave,  
you are weak and monstrous, always claiming  
to be the victim of someone else's scheme.  
You are madness, the sharp ridged knife  
of madness flaying in chaotic whiplash  
at the sky, the birds, and all manner of trees.**

**Take back your darkness, swallow it whole,  
let it stew in your innards, ruminate, reuniting  
with the depravity already there.**

**You will never lie to me again,  
pretending you wanted love when all you wanted  
was to spread your malignancy, vengeance  
for an imagined wrong, to give a landing slap  
with the full force of violent resentment and envy.**

**Slither away, your bite left no mark, ineffectual  
as your attempts to love. Judas, Brutus, master  
of deep, un-emerge-able hell. Go home. Blast away  
your caked-on body filth, reductive stench, spoiling  
all you claimed to hold sacred.**

## II

### Scapegoat

Give yourself over  
to the burn on your back,  
the sordid array of demons  
counselling your thoughts.  
Let loose the bell string,  
pull hard and hard again.  
Find yourself a ditch to  
fall into, scream out of,  
wailing at the stars.

Ruin a good morning with  
your sticky filth, throwing blame  
to deflect from the wounds of  
your own weakness.

I add you up - here, here and here.  
I will not play along  
with your parlour-tricks, your mayhem  
of pointing-the-finger lies  
when what I gave was love  
- not perfect - but love nonetheless.

Coil up in your bitterness, resentments you wear  
like a special pair of shoes,  
walking around, leaving prints over prints  
of your relentless pointless pacing.

I am not who you think I am, not willing  
to hold guilt for your depravity, for a crime never my own.  
I will say it again - I loved - I gave you love  
the best I knew how, and I showed kindness.

**Give yourself over to the intercourse  
of false justifications and accusations and  
see how it feels to be alone, here,  
with what is left -  
broken dollar-store jewelry, dandruff flakes.  
Give yourself over and  
get lost,  
out of my thoughts  
out into the isolated frozen-dead terrain  
of your own sick making.**

### III

#### Monster

**Surrender to restore  
the gifted strength, bruised  
by curses, but otherwise unharmed.  
Lay down the cloak of justice,  
Achilles' revenge. Shout fire!  
and let it burn.**

**What I did was falter,  
overspeak with heart-felt enthusiasm,  
that is all - thinking it was to a friend,  
when in fact it was a snake, no, a worm,  
without backbone, fangs or face.**

**Pour salt on it, watch it dissolve  
into its true slime-form, formless  
as the excuses of Brutus who cared nothing  
for Rome, for Caesar, had only his own  
power-grab in mind, wounded  
that he was not chosen, pride-puffed,  
feigning altruism to self-justify  
his ruthless deed.**

**Appear to me, then pass like a bad smell  
when a window is opened, or lavender calm is sprayed.  
I was fooled when I should have honoured  
the signs before, left, when I first witnessed  
your shadow-flood self-pity play. Then  
I should have hung up the phone and never  
called back. But I kept on, over that hurdle, ignoring  
its truth, always wondering, waiting for the monster  
to unmask again. When it did, it was worse than before.**

**The wolves of hell have you now, surrounded  
on all dimensional sides. Your vicious tongue,  
still twisting and twirling, angered at the glare of the sun.**

**Promise me never to return. I promise you  
I have walked by you, looked, then walked  
further up the devil's back, out  
of the inverted pit of your doing, never to look again.**

**Know I have no good memories of you,  
they have all been eradicated by this hideous calamity.  
Your words of love ring like lies,  
hiding a hostile, grudge-madness,  
a decade of trust mutilated by spiritual sickness.**

**Know your hydra head is now exposed,  
sliced off, cauterised, nullified at the core, illusion blown -  
your sweet-honey-poison dried up, disposed.**

## IV

### Deviant

**Diminished in love  
by excessive self-pity, locked  
in anguish, in anger, in the burn-machine  
lake layer of hell  
as the long sword of your insanity  
is wielded, intending to split  
my skull in two.**

**I felt it breeze past, just missing its mark.  
I felt the shock as I swerved, as you  
suckled on the teat of your unfounded  
resentments, brewing for months, draped  
in pretty fabric, niceties and endearments.  
How long had your soul gone foul,  
and I never noticed?  
No discussion, just your rigid arthritic finger  
pointing, your creased forehead further creasing,  
corpse-like and rising like a poltergeist  
from the boiling mire.**

**Poor soul. Poor you as all of your  
bold spiritual proclamations are reduced to naught.  
Take care old woman. You cannot create  
or be uplifted tied to this abhorrent deformity  
of deluded self-righteousness.  
You can feel good for a second, lift your sword,  
and be exhilarated. You can rub your hands together,  
feel the power of cruelty, demolishing  
a friendship with one swift cut.  
You can and you did, and it is now done –**

**The cancer I never knew was there is removed,  
every cell radiated and eradicated.  
I proclaim gratitude for getting me out,  
for releasing me from the leach tethered to my underbelly,  
masquerading as a trusted alley.**

**I see you, your collected violent distortions, the rage  
you assume, your sword in its ruthless downward assault,  
swing, strike past, dark mass amputated, and I am set free.**

## V

### The Hollow

The burn was received, betrayal  
like a thousand strikes  
on the same spot - ripping off  
first my skin, then sinews.  
A burn like a confession of hate,  
masquerading for years as love.

That side has now descended, into the hollow,  
along with all that burns and whose heat  
cannot be tamed or reconciled.  
I put a steel sheet over that hollow,  
cover it for good and breathe easy in my escape,  
tie my hair back and sing loudly with  
my joy and intellect intact - with my trust in  
God unharmed, my language rejuvenated.

*Layers of arsenal fumes, rising,  
I see you below in that hollow  
hunched over, lamenting  
a sickly self-pitying cry.  
Already your hands and arms, up to your elbows,  
buried like stakes deep in the unforgiving ground.  
You cannot move. You cannot hope  
for better days.  
Your hissing is useless, and the venom from your lips  
dissipates into nothing as it leaves your gaping mouth.  
You, stuck in a frozen mire, cut off  
from the current, condensed, calcified, and stalled,  
with only your conceit, your woe-is-me!  
to give you voice, some  
semblance of rudimentary comfort.*

## Unseen

The folly of faith,  
impossible to describe,  
seeing the roots, the buds  
connected but separated  
by the trunk - crusty,  
immovable, a thick stick  
stubborn realty.

The buds are the fruit of faith  
as the roots drink, low, snake-like in  
their undercavern - moist with the fluids of earth,  
tougher than the surrounding insects and worms,  
carrying substance through  
the almost impenetrable wood -  
    wood for paper, wood for footbridges,  
    and for building beaver dams  
    and a multitude of varied homes.

When the buds bloom, we smell the blossom  
hold their fragile sides, unplucked inside a gentle touch.  
Then the songbirds come, the squirrels, the first summer's  
light, and the buds turn into apples, peaches, a succulent  
cherry.

The faith of the root is actualized.  
We consume, satiated by the sweet flesh and nectar -  
nutrients flow into fingertips, bellies-centred,  
calf muscles, and our brains, fed,  
able to charge unchartered pathways,  
revolutionary understanding, shoulder altruism.

**Faith is this folly that only  
the poor in expectation can see,  
faith as fodder for the foal, necessary  
as the change of seasons, faith  
that begins  
in the root-blood-bond darkness  
far below.**

## **Blinding**

**Unyielding heat  
joined to the glowing trees  
and take-away flowers.**

**My pleasure is broken  
like a dream when waking.**

**Today I vanquish my delusions, eat  
the green strawberry and circle  
my loneliness, ghostly but growing  
bones and ligaments.**

**My choice feels like a crime  
when there are only some I can help save,  
when my soft embrace must yield to stiff arms**

**and August has just begun -  
no shade, no signs of rain.**

## **Sun-spill Son-spell**

**By myself, I was deceived,  
led by a false enthusiasm  
of generosity that fizzled out  
when reality made its claim.**

**Devotion is rare, even rarer  
is the true gift given,  
void of expectation  
on the receiver.**

**Faith is holding emptiness with God,  
a fountain that recycles its flow, continuously.**

**Jesus is a shock  
out of human nature into God's nature.  
Jesus is a higher level of heaven revealed,**

**but hard to keep the veil open when the world restricts,  
presses down with its laws, telling us otherwise.**

**I see a house.  
we will enter that house.**

**In that house,  
food and love will be abundant.**

**In this house, we will be invited,  
where the walls have a pulse,  
a warm blood rhythm.**

**From this house  
we will witness a smiling flock of geese overhead,  
crying out a simultaneous song, crying out  
with such vitality it usurps then transforms  
the dark familiar, absolving our debts  
with that song, along with every other bond  
embroidered to our skin that made us weep  
from their inexorable weight and prophecy.**

## Half Circle

Too late, in the earth,  
dug out and consumed.  
A cramp in the thigh you named  
your own, the affronted sensibility  
of your self-importance.

That cramp took out your uterus,  
took your home on the hill  
and put you in a basement,  
took me out too  
of any further equation.

Too far, the fracture thickened into  
a chasm, your mind found release  
in bold yellows and reds  
because it could no longer bear  
the subtleties of existence.

You turned a monster into an effigy  
of hope, sold justice for titillating fascism.  
I am trying to forgive you, accept your death,  
the hardened block cell walls of your mind,  
once so fecund with inquisitiveness,  
abstraction and high atmosphere.

Sometimes mercy comes as a shock,  
a rippling destructive wave, speeding, breaking  
the floorboards, the ceiling, so there is no recourse  
but to run into the wide open, pajamas on, grief  
on naked display.

Grief over our desecrated love,  
over never knowing another morning  
without raw anxiety, with allegiance only  
to the immediacy of obvious uncertainty,  
loss, the possibility of more loss.

**God is on my doorstep  
like a swarm of sparrows saying  
I love you I love you  
I am here**

**I have been broken by this unhappy year,  
still breaking, it seems.  
I cannot piece myself together.**

**God arrives as a blue jay at my back window,  
speaks, and I know the past is a finished dance,  
necessary, sealed.**

## Figurine

In the middle, anywhere,  
the Earth becomes a song,  
a vision of its collected souls.

As the snake inches forward, then  
consumes the still frog, the frog  
thinking its camouflage and stillness  
is enough protection, but it is not,  
as high above nebulas continue to spin and stars  
touch stars and explode.

How much compromise is permitted  
before love loses its purity, its testimony to truth?  
What is the threshold, obvious when reached,  
when the deformity is complete and love  
melts into a wickless waxy blob,  
incapable of sustaining any flame?

In my mind, I am seeing you  
as when I was 15, 21, 45,  
seeing your dazzling eyes,  
the lightness in your walk,  
your unencumbered joy, remembering  
our summers spent in Montreal, Phoenix, Toronto,  
in renewing conversations and camaraderie.

In my mind, I will think of you  
as one who has died and is not coming back.  
Another spirit gone, to be thankful for  
that you once were - like my father,  
my many cats, rats, birds, big black dog  
and my mentor.

You slipped on the mud, slipped up  
and couldn't return or find the courage to keep on the path.

**You detoured into the plastic city, with plastic  
placements, plastic bedrooms and digital relationships.**

**Poverty is hard, but still,  
I expected so much more from you.  
I thought we would take this to the end together –  
as family does.**

**You broke our pact. You broke my heart.  
The whole of a heavy high wave has collapsed on my back,  
and the once singular flourishing mountain that was us,  
has cracked down its centre, nothing left  
but a barren flatland -  
not a sprout, not a sound, not an insect,  
soulless, seedless, dreamless, forsaken.**

## **Hurdle**

**Sorrow finds him,  
primary, raw,  
leave-taking, unexpected  
as a push into freezing waters.**

**Cold sister of the kill,  
hostile in life and in dreams.  
It is good you are gone, I think.  
I think it would have been better  
if you could have gained depth,  
and seen it through.**

**There will be grief. There will be more  
hurting, but your ship is out on the ocean  
and he doesn't want you back on shore,  
for he knows, nothing is worth holding  
that doesn't want to be held.**

**He is a Prince whose light is fed from the heavens.  
He will experience extraordinary love,  
raise children, hold a steady fulfilment  
that nothing can snatch away.**

**There will be a building up after this devastation.  
Eventually, he will see this loss as a gift,  
a making room for a happiness  
that requires no analysis and will not break  
when it needs to leap.**

## **Over**

**The wound is the wall  
that gelds your desire,  
prevents the granting  
of your destiny –  
holder of many secrets, entrusted with  
genius vitality, and your mind  
leaping into the sacred fires,  
emerging with a discovered vocabulary,  
a fruit-heavy tree at your disposal, giver  
of never-ending nutrients, navigating  
a route to the divine.**

**The wound is the wall,  
is nothing in comparison to your offering,  
is a miniscule overcoming.  
When you know that  
you will have arrived on the other side -  
the floodgates will open, your great light  
will engulf the city, countries, and hearts  
of many different flavours.**

**The wound was the wall  
was part of your strength, a glass  
to drink from and describe its taste.  
A new proclamation  
is on the table, telling you  
to walk through, accept  
your innate purified power,  
be received, be recognized.**

## **Resolved**

**Forgetful, in exile,  
in the fires of failure,  
honouring suffering  
like a story told in form,  
a totem-working of visual permanence.**

**I bore my marriage  
to the joyous wilderness in one hand,  
and sacrilegious duty  
in the other.**

**Today, I join these hands  
to create stability, sanctuary,  
creativity touching ground and discipline.  
I burn the dead wood, releasing  
my prisoner-identity and climb out of  
the fishnet into deep fulfillment like  
into a valley with a lake and untamed  
foliage all around.**

**The pull and tug of two lives is gone,  
tension internalized as useful energy,  
as something to be incorporated, harnessed,  
the generator of a mature dream – a dream  
with no division, bound,  
and happy to be bound.**

## **Onward**

**Becoming passes into being,  
and heightened intensity  
is restored - every moment,  
alert and bearing anxiety  
for the reasonable necessity it is,  
in this time, this coming year  
of upheaval and uncertainty.**

**No joy will ever exceed the joy  
found when the light restored in your eyes,  
and your arms embraced mine from the  
hospital bed where you lay in a blue cloak  
with tubes and needles, and your mind, finally aware,  
your heart, at once fragile with shock and fear,  
but vital, perpetual in its outpouring love.**

**Beautiful son, 18, eclipsing every ideal  
with your innate wisdom, compassion and energy,  
leaping in youthful courageous commitment, tough  
where you need to be, strong and accomplished, kind  
like the sun is kind by rising, and the hawk  
as it flies overhead calling, driving home the mystery  
and the majesty of the dream.**

## Bookends

I have this day to carry  
like a large stone or like  
a child.

I can whisper my grievances  
to the pockets of clouds  
in an otherwise clear sky  
or I can make pictures with them  
in my mind, be seduced  
by their wispy ever-changing boundaries,  
divulging the shapes of creatures  
I can't even name, or branches  
extending to the edge of the sun.

I can take these last days of freedom  
and deliver them to the bitter hunter  
before their time or I can hold myself  
proper, mortal, clothed in only the day, sober,  
bound by neither inevitability nor expectation.

The day has many appendages, tricks and snares.  
It is a matter of riding clear, slightly raised  
above the ground, able to glide  
like in the dream I often have, above the bubble,  
sometimes above the trees, moving natural,  
past obstacles and footholds, just enjoying the breeze,  
the ease of a steady self-directed pace,  
and even stopping for meals,  
leashed to necessity as I glide,  
as I hold a rock, a rose  
in either hand.

## **Down Between**

**Down between  
this between  
the walls of dignity and duty.**

**Death tells me to sleep,  
close the shades and curl up.**

**The future is a mountain,  
madness with no clear line  
of victory.  
The future is a necklace  
I broke but must somehow mend  
and try to wear.**

**I refuse this burden  
too blob-like, inhospitable to bear.  
I refuse the harm of martyrdom,  
the distorted secrets divulged in dreams.**

**Nail it to the wall, pour boiled water  
on it and let it cook until it no longer bleeds.  
End this relationship as it reduces your strength  
to a failed conclusion.**

**Flood the garden, drain it  
and plant chrysanthemums.**

## Lantern

I have made my prayers,  
threw the disc and boiled  
the water.

The wind is still  
so I must be still.  
When it moves, I will rise up  
and move with it.

The stillness is not a coffin,  
nor is it emptiness,  
only a time of settling,  
internal exploration  
and four-wall refuge.

Plugged, unplugged,  
a point of arrival and departure -  
I will stay, listening like a small bird  
is always listening, ready for flight,  
ready to be initiated into a greater world  
to match the poetry in my mind.

When I will move forward,  
I have no clue, not yet.  
That I will move forward is inevitable, so  
I will not wrestle the quiet,  
will not feel myself abandoned.

I hear a faint breeze moving  
over there, over there.  
I think I hear the first syllables  
of my name.

## Rescue

End of the day, relenting,  
easing off the mighty restlessness  
that overtook the morning  
and most of the afternoon.

I know the deeds of my happiness  
and the hot flesh branding of my imprisonment.  
I know as I held council with the speakers  
in my mind – all of them directing me  
to wide open freedom and teamwork  
to stave off the forces of death  
and unrighteous burial.

They tell me it is time to close fast the wounds  
that siphon out our power, be brave  
as if we were in a deserted city on a mountain  
surrounded by a rising sea and shouting winds  
clanking their lock-fast swallowing chains.

Hold out they tell me, on the highest tower,  
at the highest point, and never  
let our trust become captive to fear.

They tell me, even though we look right,  
we look left, seeing nothing but sky and clouds,  
even though our ankles and knees are already immersed,  
as the smells of fishy salt fill our nostrils,  
holding our hands above the pressing doom,  
engage with God, they tell me.

**All at once, the voices tell me,  
stand equal, and in that equality,  
the light will come.**

**Let us be one and we will know mercy,  
stronger than gravity, than all of our bones combined.  
The light will come and it will love us,  
conquering, alleviating the final struggle.**

## **Cage of Many Pockets and Layers**

**Lead,  
into the land of vermin,  
infesting the once blooming shores,  
past the emergency-alarm, into  
living fires, boiling and sharp in  
their arrogant countenance.**

**Alone on a humble rock, standing -  
arms folded, then stretched wide and up.  
I take the hand and am led to a land  
that tests my dignity and my resolve.  
Many voices I must lose, people to leave behind.**

**The ship is the hand  
leading through levels of horror  
until the gate opens  
to the possibility for redemption.**

**Wings of demons block the sky - pilgrimage eternal,  
shaking off pity for the futile swarm moving  
like lips of a mouth moving that offers no sound or groan.**

**My mind is tied to heaven, committed to resurgence.  
My heart breaks but it is still whole, leaving,  
being led over the land of naught, where there is plenty  
of self-righteous indignation, self-sorrowing gleam  
and the shadows,  
led through and over  
flailing limbs, bodies multiplying –  
a thickening mass, swirling, swirling...**

## Wedding Band

So much already surprised us,  
the seizure thinning of sanity, thickening  
chaotic bile.

The loss, barely bearable,  
the ineffectualness of love,  
all kaleidoscopes shattered, every facet of our beings,  
bent to, immersed in, fragility.

It wasn't the stars -  
they are always saying  
hoot! and ahhhh!  
it has never been them nor  
their sway upon our inner equilibrium and  
our outer balancing of gravity.  
It wasn't even how deep and involved our prayers were  
or even our feeble masks of courage,  
denting our dignity so we could have a new form to try on,  
taste, and learn what taste is, yet again.

What it was and is is chance,  
the dispelling of random energy until the whole illusion grows  
transparent – and we, divinely shocked out of  
our complacency, our certainty,  
resemble helpless fledglings, crushed  
by a fall.

What it is is rising,  
rising from that, still broken,  
incapable of flight, but  
capable of asking God  
to lift us and wait with faith  
for the rising up.

**What it is is leaving  
our crushed shells while still inhabiting them,  
living for the fountain-spring, the miracle,  
not working within the natural laws, not  
manipulating those laws with tailspin good luck charms,  
knowing the miracle is in our leaving,  
accepting our unknowing  
in this bright surrender, this marriage vow,  
river received, inception.**

## Publication Acknowledgments

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**The poems from the section Tadpoles Find the Sun were published as a separate book *Tadpoles Find the Sun* by Cyberwit, 2020.**

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# About the Author



*Allison Grayhurst* is a member of the League of Canadian Poets. Four of her poems were nominated for “Best of the Net” in 2015/2018, and one eight-part story-poem was nominated for “Best of the Net” in 2017. She has over 1,300 poems published in more than 500 international journals and anthologies.

Her book *Somewhere Falling* was published by Beach Holme Publishers, a Porcupine Book, in Vancouver in 1995. Since then she has published eighteen other books of poetry and five collections with Edge Unlimited Publishing. Prior to the publication of *Somewhere Falling* she had a poetry book published, *Common Dream*, and four chapbooks published by *The Plowman*. Her poetry chapbook *The River is Blind* was published by Ottawa publisher above/ground press December 2012. In 2014 her chapbook *Surrogate Dharma* was published by *Kind of a Hurricane Press*, *Barometric Pressures Author Series*. In 2015, her book *No Raft – No Ocean* was published by *Scars Publications*.

**Her book *Make the Wind* was published in 2016 by Scars Publications. As well, her book *Trial and Witness* – selected poems, was published in 2016 by Creative Talents Unleashed (CTU Publishing Group). More recently, her book *Tadpoles Find the Sun* was published by Cyberwit, August 2020.**

**In 2020, her work was translated into Chinese and published in "Rendition of International Poetry Quarterly" and in "Poetry Hall".**

**In 2018, her book *Sight at Zero*, was listed #34 on CBC's "Your Ultimate Canadian Poetry List".**

**Collaborating with Allison Grayhurst on the lyrics, Vancouver-based singer/songwriter/musician Diane Barbarash has transformed eight of Allison Grayhurst's poems into songs, creating a full album. "River – Songs from the poetry of Allison Grayhurst" released October 2017.**

**Allison Grayhurst is a vegan for the animals. She lives in Toronto with her family. She also sculpts, working with clay.**

**Some of the places her work has appeared in include Parabola (Alone & Together print issue summer 2012); SUFI Journal (Featured Poet in Issue #95, Sacred Space); Elephant Journal; Literary Orphans; Blue Fifth Review; The American Aesthetic; The Brooklyn Voice; Five2One; Agave Magazine; JuxtaProse Literary Magazine, Drunk Monkeys; Now Then Manchester; South Florida Arts Journal; Gris-Gris; The Muse – An International Journal of Poetry, Storm Cellar, morphrog (sister publication of Frogmore Papers); New Binary Press Anthology; Straylight Literary Magazine (print); Chicago Record Magazine, The Milo Review; Foliate Oak Literary Magazine; The Antigonish Review; Dalhousie Review; The New Quarterly; Wascana Review; Poetry Nottingham International; The Cape Rock; Ayris; Journal of Contemporary Anglo-Scandinavian Poetry; The Toronto Quarterly; Fogged Clarity, Existere; Boston Poetry Magazine; Decanto; White Wall Review.**

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# Quotes

**“Allison Grayhurst’s poetry combines the depth and dark intensity of Sylvia Plath, the layered complex imagery of Dylan Thomas and the philosophical insights of Soren Kierkegaard, taking the reader on a fearless journey through the human condition, delving with honesty into death, grief, loss, faith, commitment, motherhood, and erotic love. Grayhurst intertwines a potent spirituality throughout her work so that each poem is not simply a statement or observation, but a revelation that demands the reader’s personal involvement. Grayhurst’s poetic genius is profound and evident. Her voice is uniquely authentic, undeniable in its dignified vulnerability as it is in its significance,” *Kyp Harness*, legendary singer/songwriter, cartoonist, author of ‘Wigford Rememberies’ and ‘The Abandoned’, Nightwood Editons; [www.kypharness.net](http://www.kypharness.net)**

**“Allison Grayhurst is the Queen of Catharsis. Her poems are like cathedrals witnessing and articulating in unflinching graphic detail the gritty angst and grief of life, while taking it to rare clarity, calm and comfort in an otherwise confusing world of deception, mediocrity and degradation. Allison Grayhurst takes the sludge of life, and with fearless sharpness of eye and heart she spins it free of maggots with the depth of honour and passion. Allison Grayhurst's work is haunting, majestic and cleansing, often leaving one breathless in the wake of its intelligence, hope, faith and love amidst the muck of life. Many of Allison Grayhurst's poems are simply masterpieces booming with thunderous insight begging to be in Bartlett's Quotations, lines such as "I drink necessity’s authority." Nothing is wishy-washy in the realm of Allison Grayhurst. Allison Grayhurst's work is sustaining, enriching, and deepening for the soul to read... a light of sanity in the world. As a poet, Allison Grayhurst**

is a lighthouse of intelligent honour... indeed, intelligence rips through her work like white water," *Taylor Jane Green*, BA, RIHR, CHT, Registered Spiritual Psychotherapist and author of *Swan Wheeler: A North American Mythology and The Rise of Eros*.

"Grayhurst's rapturous outpouring of imagery makes her poems easily enjoyable ... Like a sear the poet seeks to fathom sensual and spiritual experience through the images of a dream," *Canadian Literature*.

"Her poems read like the journal entries of a mystic – perhaps that what they are. They are abstract and vivid, like a dreamy manifestation of soul. This is the best way, in prose, one can describe the music which is ... the poetry of Allison Grayhurst," *Blaise Wigglesworth*, *Oh! Magazine: Ryerson's Arts and Culture Voice*.

"Grayhurst's poetry is a translucent, ethereal dream in which words push through the fog, always searching, struggling, and reaching for the powerful soul at its heart. Her work is vibrant and shockingly original," *Beach Holme Publishers*.

"Allison Grayhurst's poetry appears visceral, not for the faint of heart, and moves forward with a dynamism, with a frenetic pulse. If you seek the truth, the physical blood and bones, then, by all means, open the world into which we were all born," *Anne Burke*, poet, regional representative for Alberta on the League of Canadian Poets' Council, and chair of the Feminist Caucus.

"Read at your peril. You will never look at this world in quite the same way again. Your eye will instinctively search the sky for eagles and scan the dark earth for the slightest movement of smallest ant, your heart will reach for tall mountains, bathe in the most intimate of passions and in the grain and grit of our

earth. Such is Allison Grayhurst. Such is her poetry," *Eric M. Vogt*, poet and author.

"Grayhurst is a great Canadian poet. All of Allison Grayhurst's poetry is original, sometimes startling, and more often than not, powerful. Anyone who loves modern poetry that does not follow the common path will find Grayhurst complex, insightful, and as good a poet as anyone writing in the world today. Grayhurst's poetry volumes are highly, highly recommended," *Tom Davis*, poet, novelist and educator.

"Biting into the clouds and bones of desire and devotion, love and grief, Allison Grayhurst basks the reader, with breathtaking eloquence, in an elixir of words. Like lace, the elegance is revealed by what isn't said. This is stunning poetry," *Angela Hryniuk*, author of 'no visual scars'.

"Allison Grayhurst is a poet whose work is characterized by startling imagery and uncompromising emotion, whose pieces have appeared in prestigious magazines. Lights, darks, colors, and passions intertwine throughout the pages of her work," *Louise E. Allin*, *Literature and Language*.

"When I read Allison Grayhurst's poetry, I am compelled by the intensity and strength of her spirituality. Her personal experience of God drives her poetry. With honesty and vulnerability, she fleshes out the profound mystery of knowing at once both the beauty and terror of God's love, both freedom and obedience, deep joy and sorrow, both being deeply rooted in but also apart from the world, and lastly, both life and death. Her poems undulate through these paradoxes with much feeling and often leave me breathless, shaken. Allison Grayhurst's poems are both beautiful and difficult to behold," *Anna Mark*, poet and teacher.

**“The breath of roles covered in Allison Grayhurst’s poetry is exceptional. Even poems covering similar perspectives express subtle distinctions, distinctions which add depth to the poet’s larger themes. The cohesive psychology of the poet is clear, allowing for long reads and re-reads.”** says author *Patrick Linsenmeyer*.

**“Allison Grayhurst’s poetry has a tribal and timeless feeling, reminiscent of the Biblical commentary in Ecclesiastes,”** *Cristina Deptula*, editor of *Synchronized Chaos*.

## **Books by Allison Grayhurst**

### **Paperbacks with Edge Unlimited Publishing:**

**Book 1: Journey of the Awakening, 1997, Edge Unlimited Publishing; ASIN: B00CH6WO5Y; ISBN-10: 1478189339; ISBN-13: 978-1478189336**

**Book 2: The Longing to Be, 1998, Edge Unlimited Publishing; ASIN: B00CH94ZNK; ISBN-10: 1478197684; ISBN-13: 978-1478197683**

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**Tadpoles Find the Sun, 2020, Cyberwit; ISBN-10: 9390202558;  
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10: 1518842046; ISBN-13: 978-1518842047**

**Common Dream, 1991, Edge Unlimited; ISBN-10: 0969542313  
ISBN-13: 978-0969542315**

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**Surrogate Dharma, 2014, Barometric Pressures Author Series,  
Kind of a Hurricane Press**

**The River is Blind, 2012, above/ground press; ISBN-10:  
1-897224-99-0; ISBN-13: 978-1-897224-99-1**

**Four chapbooks published under the pseudonym of Jocelyn  
Kain:**

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**Perfect Love, 1989, The Plowman; ISBN: 0-929002-66-0**

**Before the Dawn, 1989, The Plowman; ISBN: 0-929002-11-3**

**Joshua's Shoulder, 1989, The Plowman; ISBN: 1-55072-025-2**

"Allison Grayhurst's poetry is a translucent, ethereal dream in which words push through the fog, always searching, struggling, and reaching for the powerful soul at its heart. Her work is vibrant and shockingly original," Beach Holme Publishers.

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Allison Grayhurst is a member of the League of Canadian Poets. Five times nominated for "Best of the Net", 2015/2017/2018, she has over 1300 poems published in over 500 international journals. She has 21 published books of poetry, six collections and six chapbooks. She lives in Toronto with her family. She also sculpts, working with clay; [www.allisongrayhurst.com](http://www.allisongrayhurst.com)



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